



Story Summary

Ali and his fiancée Zeynep dream about leaving their home in Anatolia and building a new life together in Canada. But their homeland is controlled by the Turkish government, which is on the brink of war with Britain and Russia. And although Ali finds passage to Canada to work, he is forced to leave Zeynep behind until he can earn enough to bring her out to join him.

When the First World War breaks out and Canada joins Britain, Ali is declared an enemy alien. Unable to convince his captors that he is a refugee from an oppressive regime, he is thrown in an internment camp where he must count himself lucky to have a roof over his head and food to eat.

Meanwhile, Zeynep is a horrified witness to the suffering of her Christian Armenian neighbors under the Young Turk revolutionary forces. Caught in a country that is destroying its own people, she is determined to save a precious few. But if her plan succeeds, will Zeynep still find a way to cross the ocean to search out Ali? And if she does, will he still be waiting for her?

Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch is the multi-award-winning author of more than a dozen historical picture books, chapter books and juvenile and young adult novels, including three other novels about the Armenian genocide: *The Hunger*, *Nobody's Child*, and *Daughter of War*. Her first work of narrative non-fiction, *Last Airlift: A Vietnamese Orphan's Rescue from War*, won the Red Cedar Information Book Award, was an OLA Red Maple Honour Book, and was nominated for the Hamilton Literary Award. It was followed in 2012 by *One Step at a Time: A Vietnamese Child Finds Her Way*, winner of the 2014 OLA Silver Birch Non-Fiction Award. In 2008, in recognition of her outstanding achievement in the development of the culture of Ukraine, Marsha was awarded the Order of Princess Olha, which was bestowed upon her personally by the president of Ukraine. Marsha lives in Brantford, Ontario.

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World War I, Armenian Genocide, Anatolia, Canada, Internment Camps, Prejudice, Bearing Witness

BISAC Codes

JUV039120 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Issues / Prejudice & Racism

JUV039250 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Issues / Emigration & Immigration

JUV016080 JUVENILE FICTION / Historical / Military & Wars

Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell : Z+ | Lexile measure : HL800L

BOOK CLUBS

This guide has been developed for use in classroom book clubs/literature circles. Book clubs support and develop the love of reading as well as help students build comprehension and support the development of collaborative learning and critical thinking.

In book clubs students:

- meet in small groups (4–8) to discuss a book they are reading
- take turns assuming a leadership role within the group
- meet regularly and set the pace for their reading
- take ownership for their learning by:
 - selecting the book they will read (usually from a predetermined list provided by the teacher)
 - determine the pace of the reading
 - prepare for and run their discussions.

Prior to beginning with book clubs, teachers:

- take time to develop and nurture whole class discussions about books while modeling the skills and behaviors needed to collaborate and work together as a book club
- provide guidance, modeling, and support
- become familiar with all texts prior to making them available to students

During book club discussions, teachers:

- develop a schedule for book clubs ensuring they provide time for reading and discussion
- provide mini-lessons for any needs that may arise
- monitor through observation and conferring as well as supporting student self-assessment

Key elements:

- Groups meet on a regular basis, with time provided in class to read and discuss their book
- Students use a “reader’s notebook” to write notes, comments, insights, and questions while they read
- Students bring their reader’s notebook to each meeting to support their discussion
- Discussion topics may emerge from the students as they read; however, the teacher provides discussion topics and provocations to help students engage in rich discussions (suggestions are provided in this guide)
- Group meetings are collaborative, with each group developing a set of norms for their group
- The teacher serves as facilitator
- Assessment is grounded in teacher observation, student conversations, and student self-assessment
- Book clubs promote a love of reading

Thinking about Assessment...

This Discussion Guide offers a range of prompts, tasks, and provocations to support Book Club discussions. While using this guide in the classroom, teachers have a number of opportunities to use observation, conversation, and product to assess student thinking and learning. The tasks and prompts offered in this guide are designed to support discussion, sharing, and student thinking while providing an opportunity for students to demonstrate comprehension, extension of thinking, and critical literacy. Assessment can include: self-assessment and peer assessment, conversations with students through teacher/student conferences; group discussions; and products created by the students.

For the teacher and student to have a clear, common understanding of the expectations and criteria to achieve success while reading the novels, educators develop learning goals based on curriculum expectations and share them with the students in language they can understand. Then together, the educator and students co-create criteria to make the path to success visible and clear.

These success criteria are posted in the classroom, are visible to all students, and may be revised and edited based on the learning and understanding of the students.

As the Book Club meetings are collaborative and begin with the groups developing a set of norms for their group, it is suggested that all groups open each meeting with a reflection of the previous discussion. These reflections can highlight what went well during the discussions; what needs to improve in these discussions; and considerations for the current discussion.

Discussion Guide:

This discussion guide will offer a variety of tasks, discussion prompts, and questions to provoke thinking and deepen comprehension before, during, and after reading of the novel. These are suggestions only and it is certainly not necessary to complete the entire list of suggested activities/questions. Educators are encouraged to make choices based on the strengths, needs, and interests of the students.

Highlighted Curriculum Expectations

Ontario Ministry of Education Language Arts Curriculum K–8

Oral Communication

- 1.2 Active Listening Strategies
- 1.3 Comprehension Strategies
- 1.4 Demonstrating Understanding
- 1.5 Making Inferences/Interpreting Texts
- 1.6 Extending Understanding

Reading for Meaning

- 1.4 Demonstrating Understanding
- 1.5 Making Inferences/ Interpreting Texts
- 1.6 Extending Understanding
- 1.7 Analyzing Texts
- 1.8 Responding and Evaluating Texts
- 1.9 Point of View

Understanding Form and Style

- 2.1 Text Form

Reading with Fluency

- 3.1 Reading Familiar Words
- 3.2 Reading Unfamiliar Words

Reading: Reflecting on Reading Skills and Strategies

- 4.1 Metacognition

One suggested activity in this guide can be formatted as a debate. More information about a debate format can be found in *Guides to Effective Literacy Instruction: Oral Communication Volume 4*

Before Reading

The purpose of these tasks is to develop knowledge and understanding as well as to prompt conversation and discussion about the topics mentioned throughout this novel. In doing so, the hope is that readers will become engaged as they read, comprehend the issues presented, and develop a sense of empathy for the characters.

Note: Due to the content of the novel, and to facilitate understanding of the events in the novel, it is suggested the readers become acquainted with the topic of the Armenian Genocide during World War I.

1. Locate a historical map of the locations and boundaries of the countries that serve as the setting for this novel during the early 1900's. Highlight the location of Anatolia, the Dersim Mountains, and the countries under the Ottoman Empire.

Locate a map of the current boundaries of the same area in the world. In your book club group, discuss how the boundaries have changed since the early 1900's.

What are the names of the countries currently located in that area of the world?

2. Research the Armenian Genocide during World War I. What caused the start of this war? Who were the countries at war? Share your findings in the book club group.
3. As a group, ensure you understand the following vocabulary/terms/roles from the novel. You may divide up the list, with each person taking responsibility for researching and explaining the meaning of an assigned term.
 - Internment camp
 - Internee
 - Banished
 - Revolutionary forces
 - Christians
 - Muslims
 - Missionaries
 - Zaza Language
 - The existence and role of Consulates in a foreign country
 - foreshadowing

During Reading

The author has organized the novel into parts. To facilitate the discussion in your book club group, it is advised to check in with your group after each part. The Author's Note at the end of the novel is a very important part that should not be missed. It will provide the reader with important details about this historical era. This is also included as part of the discussion guide. Once again, the questions included are suggestions and there is flexibility of choice for the group when engaging in their discussions.

Part One

1. In Part One we are introduced to Ali and Zeynep, the main characters in the novel.

How does the author demonstrate to the reader the close connection these two main characters have to their family members? What have you learned about the Alevi Kurds and the Armenian people in this part of the novel?

2. Why are the comments regarding the differences and tensions between the Christians and Muslims important to understand in this part of the novel?
3. Explain Zeynep's frustration in her conversation with the missionary, Miss Anton.
4. Why do you think it was so important and necessary for Zeynep to leave her family and go with the missionaries?
5. In Chapter 2 of Part One Zeynep shares with the readers her observations of the differences between her family and the ways of the missionaries. As a group, discuss these differences. Did you notice any similarities?
6. The novel is written in the format of journal entries from the perspectives of both Zeynep and Ali. Does this format help you to understand the story better? Why? Why not?
7. Sadness and loss have been described to the reader a few times up to this point in the novel. From your point of view, describe an event that is connected to deep loss for one or a few of the characters in the novel. What is that character doing to cope with the

loss? Can you connect this feeling to a situation in your own life? Write a journal entry to share your experience.

8. The top of page 54 describes Zeynep's questioning of Ali's mom. Do you agree with her questions? Why do you think Ali's mom hid the letters from Ali to Zeynep? Do you agree with what she did? Why? Why not?

How does this one action impact the story and the events that take place?

9. On page 57, Zeynep closes the chapter with the following words: "It doesn't make sense. Armenians have lived in Anatolia for thousands of years, just like Alevis. Anatolia is part of Turkey. We all share this country. How I fear for our future." Explain what you think Zeynep feels and thinks at this point in the novel. How are these words a foreshadowing of what is to come for the Alevi Kurds and Armenians?

Part Two

1. In Chapter 1, we are hearing from Ali for the first time in the novel and learning his perspective and the documentation of his life since leaving Anatolia. What are you, the reader, understanding about Canada's role in World War I? What are some of the causes of this war? How does this war impact Ali and the other Alevi Kurds in Canada? Are you noticing any misunderstandings?
2. In Chapter 2 on page 72, Ali describes the "ritual semah" (the dance prayer). Why is this ritual performance important for Ali?

How does reliving this memory get Ali into trouble? Many people live in fear during times of war. How is fear demonstrated by Ali and by Officer Casey?

3. In Chapter 2, the reader gets another explanation of the tensions behind World War I and the groups involved. Discuss your understanding and insights with your book club group.

Part Three

1. During times of war, people are often challenged to choose between doing what is right and what needs

to be done in order to save their own lives or the lives of others they care about.

In this part, we read about the hiding of Raffi and Onnig; the Turkish army's hatred of the Armenian people and their killing of Armenian soldiers; and the citizens helping those ill with typhus. Choose one of the above events and describe both the challenges and moral dilemmas faced. Be sure to include the perspectives of all groups.

This can be presented in a debate format. Present your statement explaining why this event was necessary, as well as evidence to support your statement. The opposing sides will present and question from their perspective.

Part Four

1. Map out Ali's journey during his time in Canada. Where did he land when he first arrived in Canada? Where did he work? Where was he sent as an internee?
2. In this part Nadie demonstrates to Ali "how important it is to follow dreams" (p.139). Describe what Nadie had to endure in order to follow her dreams. How did this help or challenge Ali's decision? Was there a time when you were challenged in attempting to follow a dream?

Part Five

1. How are the war conditions becoming more intense and critical for Zeynep? The other Alevi Kurds? Explain why Zeynep's journal is very important in this part of the novel.
2. What did the soldiers do to elicit and deepen the fear in the citizens of Harput, Anatolia?
3. How did the announcement of the deportation dates of the Armenian people change the situation at this point in the war?
4. How did Zeynep demonstrate friendship and love for her Armenian friends? What do you, the reader, think was her most courageous act thus far in the novel?
5. Discuss the role of the American consulate. How did the Consul help the Armenian people?

Author's Note:

1. Read the chapter together as a group. Discuss the relevance of the facts and information shared by the author in this part of the novel. How do these facts help you as a reader to further understand this time in history? What further research would you like to explore in order to add to and deepen your understanding as a reader about this topic?

After Reading

1. In the last few pages of the novel, the author includes photographs of the internment camp. As a small group, research the Kapuskasing Internment Camp. Consider finding the answers to the following questions:
 - Why did this camp exist?
 - Who created and ran the camp?
2. What do you think were the causes of World War I? How are these causes similar to/different from other major historical events in the world (e.g. the Bosnian War, WWII, the Rwandan genocide)?
 - Who were held as internees in this camp?
 - What was the role of the internees while in this camp?
 - What was life like for the internees?
 - What was life like for the soldiers running the camp?
 - When was the camp closed?

Present your information in a visual format of your choice, e.g. padlet, slide show, infographic



Ontario

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